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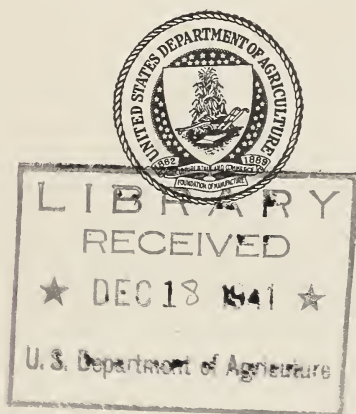
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AAA Faces the Future

*Adapted from an address by R. M. Evans,
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AAA Faces the Future

At this critical time in the life of the Nation it is not only appropriate but urgent that we take stock of the position of the farmer and of the AAA program which is the farmer's means of protection in a war-torn world. This is no time for deceiving ourselves. We in AAA should not and do not wish to side-step this responsibility. We must not allow our preoccupation with the administration of the program to divert us from taking a broad view of things. We must not fall into that frame of mind described as "business as usual," when events are moving so swiftly that they cry out for sure, swift, and wise action.

It is imperative that we take stock and that we look ahead. Let us honestly appraise this business known as AAA. It is a program given to farmers by the Congress and by the President and the Secretary of Agriculture. What have we done with it? What has been accomplished? What are our assets?

AAA's Accomplishments and Assets

First, I think we can assert without serious danger of contradiction that the AAA program has kept the bulk of farmers in business these last 8 years, and that without AAA the backbone of American farming would have been broken through bankruptcies and foreclosures. Second, we have made a creditable start in organizing and extending conservation farming. Third, we have organized surpluses through the Ever-Normal Granary to remove some of their worst price-depressing effects and to give to the consumer a guarantee of ample supplies at all times at reasonable prices. Fourth, we just recently have reached, with our new legislation and new programs of the

Department, the goal of parity for our basic commodities. AAA's accomplishments group around these main heads.

Now, what are our assets? First, we have an administrative organization that deals directly and personally with more than 6 million farm families. It is an effective organization whose steadily increasing efficiency demonstrates on a grand scale that you can have democracy and efficiency too. Second, we have the good will and respect of the bulk of farmers and of a considerable portion of the leaders of the people. Third, with the assistance of AAA and cooperating agencies, farmers are the best-informed large group in America on national and international affairs. Fourth, we have the first large-scale example of a working economic democracy in the world—the right and the means whereby the individual has an opportunity to share in decisions which affect his economic welfare.

Summing up our assets, I may say that AAA is a going concern. It has a record of achievement and it has assets of enormous value. Nearly everybody agrees with the objectives of AAA, but some people violently disagree with the methods we have used. That is always the case in every field of public endeavor; the fighting begins when leaders develop methods. Nevertheless, even our enemies agree that AAA is a force in American life with which everyone has to reckon. This imposes upon us very serious responsibilities—responsibilities so great that we cannot take them lightly. Used intelligently and wisely, AAA can be shaped to further the finest aspirations of man.

A Developing Program.—And so I say to you now, at the end of 8 years, at the most serious time in all our American history, that AAA must not rest on its laurels. We cannot stand still. We must move ahead. We must not fight a kind of defensive war to retain the rights, privileges, and prerogatives that the AAA program has given us. It is absolutely

essential that we recognize that change is inevitable and that AAA must change with the times. AAA, like a human being, either grows or it shrivels up and dies. So we must look the future squarely in the face and consciously, deliberately, and wisely shift our AAA program as needed to enable it to weather the storms and give to our farming people and to the Nation the protection which this great public grant of power makes possible. If we fail in that, we lose the great battle for agriculture.

Our Responsibilities

Now let us look ahead to some of the things that face farmers and the Nation. Let us decide what kind of farm life we want in this country. I am sure everyone of us has the ideal of the family farm as the bulwark of our agriculture and of our democracy itself in the United States. We are agrarian. We are passionately devoted to retaining or, perhaps, regaining that fine old American ideal of farming. But let us be realistic and recognize that forces are at work which have impaired and which threaten that type of farming.

We Must Master Machines.—We are living through a revolution in agricultural production techniques. **Machines are changing the face of our land.** Machines, thank God, are making it unnecessary that we spend so much back-breaking effort to produce the food and fiber the world needs. But just as surely as the sun rises in the east, the machine on the farm is breaking up the old family-type farm. It is carrying us in the direction of larger units, and fewer owners. Is this something we want? Do we want an agriculture in this country composed of a relatively few large landowners, many of them perhaps corporations, and the bulk of farmers working for wages? Is that the end of the trail for the American farmer? I don't think so. For the sake of the peace, happiness, and prosperity of the millions of

Americans living on the land, we want a wide diffusion of ownership.

But we don't want to try to block the development and use of machines on the farm. It would be futile anyway. Rather, we must work out means of using the machine for socially desirable ends. We must work with it and master it, otherwise it is a blind force that will enslave us. Haven't we the brains to use the machine—cooperatively perhaps—so that all farmers may share in its benefits?

More Economical Units Needed.—The second thing that has been cutting into our ideal of the family type of farm is the division of farms into units so small that they are not economical. We have millions of farmers doomed to low income for no other reason than that they haven't large enough farms, large enough capital to enable them to live decently as American farmers ought to live. That problem is tied with the fact that we have surplus population on the farms. We have from 6 to 8 million people more than are needed to produce all the farm goods this country can consume and ship abroad. Actually, we need no more than 24 million people (or even less) living on the farms of this country. Instead, we have about 30 million people living on farms. That surplus farm population is very much like our army of the unemployed in the cities.

The Era of Abundance.—Whether in cities or on the land these millions of restless unemployed Americans challenge us to do something constructive to meet the problem they represent. It is a problem that lies at the very root of all our world troubles. For we are in a world revolution. **We are passing from an age-old era of scarcity to an era of abundance made available to us by our marvelous scientific achievements in the field of production.** The conflict in the world today, both within our Nation and without, is man's struggle for mastery of his own machines. Our generation has not yet learned to live with abundance,

and until mankind has learned how to do this we shall have unemployment, distress, revolution, and war.

The farmer has had more experience in living with abundance than anyone else in our society. It is as natural for a farmer to produce abundantly as it is for him to breathe. Except for crop failures, he lives in an atmosphere of abundance of everything he can produce—except cash. Unlike our great industrial monopolies, the farmer has never deprived people of food and fiber in order to hold up price. And through the AAA program the farmer has set an example for all society by organizing surpluses into an ordered abundance that is a blessing instead of a curse. The Ever-Normal Granary with its crop insurance feature is one of the great modern achievements of mankind because it demonstrates one of the ways by which we can meet the problem of machine-made abundance scientifically and constructively.

Yet the Ever-Normal Granary is only part of the answer we are seeking. We must fashion other programs to enable us to live in this new world of plenty. We cannot be satisfied with such stop-gaps as putting the unemployed on Government relief. Neither is putting people on a subsistence farming basis a solution. This dodges the issue and would deny to these people their share in the abundance from our scientific achievements. Furthermore, agriculture alone cannot shoulder the whole burden of these unemployed, whether of the land or of the cities, nor should agriculture be expected to do so, for it is part and parcel of our whole national problem.

Underconsumption.—Valuable as I consider the Stamp Plan to be, I do not believe it is the final answer of how to live with plenty without poverty. The Stamp Plan is a notable demonstration of the possibilities of increased domestic consumption for a large number of farm products. It is not the complete solution to the farm problem, but it does indicate that full

employment and full wages will bring about a much higher level of consumption of many farm products. The Stamp Plan has alleviated much distress. I think every farmer should be familiar with its workings and objectives, that he should give it wholehearted support, for it is an experiment that throws much light on the problems of the present and of the future.

Certainly it has focused much-needed attention on the problems of underconsumption and nutrition in this country. Those are subjects of the greatest concern to farmers, because it is the business of farmers to feed and clothe people. The living-at-home programs of the Extension Service, made more effective by the AAA program, and the work of the Farm Security Administration are definite attacks on the problem. So also are all the programs that improve the income of the masses of people, for poor nutrition and low income are twin evils.

Conservation.—Another thing we have learned is that there is a direct connection between nutrition and conservation. **Impoverished soil cannot produce good food.** Just as surely as poor soil makes poor people, poor soil makes poor diets. We cannot go on squandering our soil, wasting its substance and its richness as in the past if we expect to have a well-nourished, strong people in the future. The Soil Conservation Service program and the AAA conservation program have come none too soon. They are insuring that we shall have continuing abundance from the land. They are not the answer to the great problem of our age, but without them no answer is possible.

Parity.—In all these and many other ways we are fitting ourselves to live in the new world before us. **In our zest for the new, however, we must not overlook that farm income must be maintained if farmers are to have any chance at all.** Many of the programs in agriculture today would not be possible were it not for the AAA program, which supports prices and income. AAA has put a protective-

income tent over agriculture that gives us shelter while we work out the problems that beset us. Let us not be ashamed of wanting parity income—it is a worthy, practicable goal. It is not the solution to all our problems, but it is part of it, and it will bring the rest of the solution nearer to us. I for one am confident that in the era of abundance before us farmers will receive an abundant reward for abundant production.

The one thing we can all be sure of is that we cannot return to an age that is past, even though it is only a few years past. We must, and I think we shall, adjust our thinking and our ways of doing business to meet the new order that is here. I think farmers already have done more along these lines than any other class of society. Less than 2 weeks ago wheat farmers voted 4 to 1 for marketing quotas in the first national quota referendum. They joined the cotton, tobacco, and peanut farmers in tackling surpluses the modern way, the AAA way. It was a magnificent tribute to the program and to the good, sound sense of farmers. Yet a few short years ago quotas and referendums would have been regarded as radical, visionary, and contrary to farmer nature. Yes, times change.

Defense and AAA.—I am proud of the new methods that have come into our farming these last 8 years. **AAA itself represents a big change in the traditional conduct of farming.** The AAA program itself has been changed repeatedly. This has irritated farmers, and I don't blame them, but on the other hand I believe it has been a good thing for us. I think the way Corn Belt farmers accepted a reversal in policy on the matter of corn quotas this past spring is one of the finest evidences of the vitality of AAA that has ever been shown. An organization that can take such a great shift as that in stride is one that offers real hope for the stormy days ahead.

It dispels any doubt that AAA can engineer adjustments upward or downward as required

for defense. The action of farmers this spring in all parts of the country in responding to the call of the Secretary for increased production in certain lines, particularly in converting the feed supplies in the Ever-Normal Granary into concentrated livestock products more rapidly than normal, should be cheering news to the whole Nation. We have been proud that agriculture is better prepared than any other industry. We can now be proud that farmers through the AAA program are making further necessary adjustments quickly and effectively to back up the defense effort.

We are determined that this Nation shall not lack for any necessary farm product for the critical days ahead. We shall see that the President and the Secretary of Agriculture have enough and more than enough food and fiber supplies at their command to use as a weapon for defense and, later, in the peace negotiations, as an instrument for building a decent world. The farmers will not let the Nation down in this time of stress, and I am confident that the Nation will not let the farmer down. As farmers and as representatives of AAA, we pledge our unlimited support to the all-out defense effort of this Nation, without any reservations whatever.

We have shown that we can change AAA as needed. We must always be careful to see that our changes add up for the good of farmers and the country. The Germans under Hitler are capitalizing this moment of our passage from an era of scarcity to an era of abundance by using the machine to dominate their own and other peoples. We are bound to resist this destructive force. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that Hitler has sensed the new significance of the machine and has shifted the German economy to utilize it for selfish purposes. **The German prostitution of the machine for evil purposes must be ended.** At the same time we must learn to use our wonderful productive powers for constructive purposes.

That, in a nutshell, is our problem, and it must and will be solved by democratic means.

The American Ideal.—We can adjust ourselves and our ways of doing business and yet retain the fundamentals of democracy and of private ownership. To do this I believe we must make freedom and democracy as burning a religion with our people as the ideal of the Third Reich is to the German people. Hitler offers Germans in the Third Reich the promise of an improved economic status. We have something much better, much finer. We must revive our old American ideal of this country as a land of opportunity for the common man. It is a promise that can be fulfilled, a promise of decent income as well as freedom, and it must be fulfilled if we and our ways are to survive.

We must face the fact that there is an economic side to democracy as well as a political and a social side. Let us recognize that democracy means freedom plus groceries. We have put an end to translating freedom as the freedom to starve to death in the richest country in the world. Freedom and reasonable prosperity for all are within our reach for the first time. They are a heritage made possible by our brilliant achievements in science and invention. **This heritage is ours for the taking, but it is not ours without a fight.** That is the positive ideal of American democracy that we should place in front of us as an ideal that men will sacrifice and fight for because it is worth the price.

Post-War Solution.—To farmers who, like many others, are worrying about what will happen at the end of this defense effort, let me say that we shall not have another depression like 1932. If we should go into such a tailspin we'll never come out of it until we have crashed in a revolution that will bring no man knows what. But there is no need to have another severe depression. When this gigantic defense effort is over we must shift defense production into full industrial production of

the goods men need and will buy. **Full production, full employment, full wages—that is the only solution for us and our American way of life.**

AAA's Future

Whatever the future brings, you farmers have the power through the economic democracy of AAA to meet it successfully. More than that—you can determine to a large extent what that future will be. If disaster befalls, it will come because you failed to use the tools at your command.

So I say to you at this time of looking ahead and shaping the program for 1942, be alert to the future but not fearful of it. Plan changes as needed in your AAA program to fit the changing times and be courageous enough to carry them through. I cannot tell you just what the changes should be but I can give you in broad perspective the general lines along which I believe our thought and activity should follow. **Keeping in mind that whatever we do should fit in with the broad general program of America in its struggle for freedom, democratic control, and opportunity for all, I believe the meaning to AAA is as follows:**

First, the democracy of AAA should be broadened to reach more of the small farmers, tenants, and sharecroppers. AAA committees should represent a complete cross section of agriculture.

Second, the organization of AAA should be tightened to make it more protective of farmers' interests. We should make our committees function more efficiently and more democratically. This will come about as committeemen become better informed.

Third, we should extend more of the benefits of AAA to the small farmers and sharecroppers. Especially since the enactment of the new 85-percent loan, I believe we can well afford and should use more of our wheat, corn, cotton, tobacco, and other payments to alleviate distress and increase the opportunities for small

producers of those crops. If we want most of the farmers who till the soil to own the land they work, we should use the power of AAA to help bring this about.

Fourth, we must consider changing AAA to make it cushion the shocks mechanization has brought to many of the people on our farms. Whether this should be done by scaling down payments to big farmers and increasing them to small farmers, whether by payments that will permit groups of farmers to use machinery cooperatively, or in other ways, I do not know. I do think, however, that AAA would be unworthy of its trust if it should, with all its vast powers, fail to make every effort to see and meet and alleviate, if not completely to solve, this problem brought about by the rapid extension of machine farming.

Fifth, we should make our conservation program more positive and more thorough. As we do this, farmers will learn, and the public will learn, that land properly farmed means still fewer acres in soil-depleting crops, and this will spell abundance, too.

Sixth, always keep parity as our goal. In the new world we are entering it will not be considered wicked for the farmer to get parity.

And so I see the AAA of the future as an organization guarding farm prices and income, guarding the land for the farmer and the Nation, organizing supplies for the good of society, modifying the trend to large-scale farming, promoting shifts to economic-sized farms, improving the lot of all who farm, and helping bring about increased consumption, so essential to the functioning of our economic system. It is our means of helping our generation to build the kind of world we want.

I see the AAA of the future as a great force for the preservation of democracy. In my opinion AAA will be one of the chief means of keeping America on the right track during the next few years. Ours is a grave responsibility. We can rise to it only by facing the facts, and by acting. Let us not be afraid of the future; and let us always be an action agency.

